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ABSTRACT

This report outlines a strategy whereby New York's Regents Committee on Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities plans to implement recommendations of the New York State Board of Regents Select Commission on Disability. Implementation will begin with those recommendations that have the greatest near-term impact on improving access to quality educational, rehabilitation, and cultural services for all New Yorkers with disabilities. These recommendations include: increase placement of students in the least restrictive environment; critically review the Committee on Special Education process through which students access the educational services they need; establish and enforce performance standards based on individual outcomes; design a multiyear planning process supported by a database that will provide accurate, comprehensive information about persons with disabilities; and allow access to and transfer of assistive technology among programs based on the needs of the individual. In addition, the Committee recommends that the New York State Education Department address the issues of: improved and more sensitive preservice, inservice, and community training; prevention of birth defects and accidents; and smooth, effective transitions through the life course. Tables summarize planned actions, State Education Department activities that relate to those actions, implementation directions, and expected outcomes. (JDD)

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ED 370 302

BLUEPRINT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REGENTS SELECT COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Background on Select Commission

In 1991, the Board of Regents established a Select Commission on Disability to focus on issues affecting New York State's system of serving individuals with disabilities. The Commission members, specifically chosen because of their generalist backgrounds, concentrated on the services under the purview of the Board of Regents and the State Education Department (SED), such as education and training for the work place. The Commission also dealt with issues of coordination that cross agency lines and affect persons with disabilities. The Commission called upon leading experts in the field of disability and education and sought advice from many persons with disabilities to guide its deliberations. In July 1993, the Commission produced its final report which presents 13 far-reaching recommendations for change.

Regents Directions

At its September and October meetings, the Regents Committee on Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities considered the 13 major recommendations of the Regents Select Commission on Disability. Based on these discussions, the Committee members determined that all the Commission recommendations have merit and should be pursued by the various Offices of SED. As a result, at its November meeting, each relevant Committee of the Regents reviewed the blueprint as it pertains to its area of oversight, and modified or endorsed the contents as appropriate.

The final blueprint for implementation, which incorporates the changes from the Regents Committees, is being presented to the full Board of Regents in December for approval. Subsequently, each SED program office will be responsible for developing a more detailed work plan of implementation steps, and will keep its Regents Committee updated on progress. In addition, the Regents will also appoint an Advisory Committee to oversee the coordinated implementation of these recommendations. The Committee members will be selected from among persons with disabilities who use the services administered by SED, other agencies, employers, educators and other interested parties.

On the basis of this blueprint, the Department will concentrate first on those recommendations that will have the greatest near term impact on improving access to quality educational, rehabilitation and cultural services for all New Yorkers with disabilities. These areas include:

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Increase the placement of students in the least restrictive environments.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

3: Services Based on the Specific Needs of Students with Disabilities
4: Increased Placements in the Least Restrictive Environments

Critically review the Committee on Special Education process through which students access the educational services they need.

Addresses Commission recommendation:

13: Make the Service Delivery Process More Fair and More Responsive

Establish and enforce performance standards based on individual outcomes.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

5: Compliance with Outcome-Based Standards
6: Specific Goals and Outcomes for Special Education Curricula
7: Evaluation of All Existing and New Programs

Design a multiyear planning process supported by a database that will provide accurate, comprehensive information about persons with disabilities.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

1: Multiyear Planning
2: Priorities for the Allocation of Resources
#10: Statewide Database, Research, and Information Program

Allow the appropriate access to and transfer of assistive technology among programs based on the needs of the individual.

Addresses Commission recommendation:

11: Appropriate Use and Transfer of Assistive Technologies

In addition, the VESID Committee recommends SED address issues of transition, prevention and training as described in the following Commission recommendations:

8: Improved and More Sensitive Preservice, In-Service, and Community Training

9: Prevention of Birth Defects and Accidents

#12: Smooth, Effective Transitions through the Life Course

BLUEPRINT FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Increase the Placement of Students in the Least Restrictive Environments

Discussion of Recommendation:

The Commission has expressed concern that New York State is "far below national norms in the number of students with disabilities in regular classrooms and above the national average in the number of students (with disabilities) in a separate facility." In explaining its concern, the Commission cites specific data that were reported to the U.S. Department of Education for the 1989-90 school year. These data indicate that, whereas the national average for placement of students with disabilities (ages 6-21) in regular classrooms was 31.5 percent, New York placed only 6.9 percent of its students with disabilities in such settings. Likewise, whereas 6.1 percent of students with disabilities nationally were being educated in separate facilities, New York educated 12.6 percent of its students with disabilities in segregated settings.

Data for the 1992-93 school year are now available. The methods for reporting this data have been updated in New York State to be more consistent with Federal reporting requirements. The new data indicates that 28.6 percent of New York State's students with disabilities were placed in regular classrooms, while 10.7 percent were educated in separate facilities. These updated data provide a more consistent comparison with national norms.

In its final report, the Commission neither debates nor proposes a policy of total "inclusion" for students with disabilities. Instead, the Commission proposes that New York increase the placement of children with disabilities in regular classrooms to the level of the national average.

To achieve this goal, the Commission suggests four areas of activity. Specifically, the Commission proposes:

- a study of how and why students with disabilities are referred to the local Committees on Special Education (CSEs), with a focus on prereferral interventions and preventive services that might be provided as alternatives to special education;

- o changes in regulations to encourage schools to set up alternative models to special education that rely less upon the traditional model of pulling special education children out of regular classrooms for services;

- o changes in the Individualized Education Program that would require districts to explain how the proposed educational program will lead to a less restrictive life for the child, including the services that could increase the child's chances for a less restrictive life; and

- o a comprehensive reform of the entire system of education and vocational rehabilitation to make New York State a model of universal compliance with disability policy.

The Commission's recognition of the impact of funding on placement led to a separate recommendation regarding State aid. In regard to the least restrictive environment issue, the Commission proposes that the funding of special education services be made "neutral,...meaning that there should be no incentive to maintain a system of segregated education."

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

The Department is currently reviewing its policies regarding the placement of students with disabilities within the least restrictive environment. This review began with an analysis of not only the placement data for other states, but also a consideration of individual states' experiences in moving toward more integrated approaches to providing special education programs and services. The Department staff conducting this review have also visited districts in New York State that have been particularly effective in providing appropriate services for students with disabilities in district-based programs.

Simultaneously, the Department has been involved in an overall review of State aid. Recognizing the concern that existing State aid mechanisms may have influenced the placements of students with disabilities, Department staff have focused on identifying the relationship of State aid formulae for students with disabilities and actual placements. The review of State aid for special education programs and services has also included a detailed review of the experiences of other states.

The initial conclusions of both Department reviews are consistent with the findings of the Regents Commission. Prior to the publication of the Commission report, staff determined that the Department needs to develop a clearly stated set of policies and activities which will lead to the provision of more opportunities for students with disabilities to be educated with their nondisabled peers. This necessitates the cooperation and collaboration of non-special education preschool and school district personnel. Moreover, it has been determined that existing funding mechanisms must be changed to ensure that State reimbursement is not a factor in district-based decisions regarding the most appropriate placements for students with disabilities.

Initial proposals for policies, activities and funding mechanisms to support the education of students with disabilities within the least restrictive environments have been developed. These proposals have been disseminated for public comment, which has been encouraged through public discussions in different regions of the State. Currently, the Board of Regents Committee on Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education and its Subcommittees on State Aid and Special Education in New York City are considering these proposals for future action.

Implementation Directions:

The submission of the recommendations of the Regents Commission occurred at a time that has allowed many of their insights to be incorporated in the current Department discussion. The Commission's recommendation regarding the need for a review of the Committee on Special Education process (which will be discussed later in this report) provides the larger context within which the current discussion of special education policies and funding must occur. Specifically, our "blueprint" for implementing the Commission's recommendations identifies a number of issues that must be adequately addressed in the policies and funding that are under development:

- The Department must develop and consistently use definitions that accurately describe the Department's position regarding the placement of students with disabilities.

- The Department's approach to providing special education within the least restrictive environments must be based upon the availability of a full range of options of special education programs and services, including at the preschool level. If regulations prevent schools from making these options available, schools should have the opportunity to request waivers for innovative programs that offer less restrictive learning environments.

- The Department must communicate the position that, with few exceptions, the full range of options can be provided in local communities within public school buildings.

- The Department must incorporate the preferences of the individual and the family within the process of selecting appropriate services and placements for individual students. This is only possible where a full range of options is available.

- The Department must ensure that its programs for students with disabilities will lead to greater integrated employment opportunities for such students. To this end, existing Department initiatives, particularly in the area of workforce preparation, must incorporate the goals and needs of students with disabilities.

- The Department must develop a plan for a funding system which encourages the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities, i.e., a funding system that is fiscally neutral.

Critically review the Committee on Special Education process through which students access the educational services they need

Discussion of Recommendation:

In proposing a review of the Committee on Special Education (CSE) process, the Commission specifically addresses the issue of access to services from the consumer's perspective. As defined by the Commission, such a review would seek to answer the questions, "How can the Department revise the CSE process to make it more accessible and more timely?" and, "How can the Department make the CSE process more fair and more responsive to the needs and desires of students with disabilities and their parents?"

However, throughout its report, the Commission makes other recommendations that could also be addressed through a review of the CSE process. Issues related to the provision of services based upon student needs (recommendation #3) and the placement of students in the least restrictive environments (recommendation #4) relate directly to the CSE process. The Commission also proposes that specific goals and outcomes for special education curricula be clearly identified and include the development of skills for independent living (recommendation #6). These specific goals and outcomes, as well as those related to the transition of students from school to work and postsecondary education (recommendation #12) will need to be incorporated in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is developed by the CSE. Thus, to adequately address the full range of the Commission's recommendations, the review of the CSE process will need to be expanded beyond the issues of fairness and responsiveness to include issues of referral, the availability of a full array of services, the development of the IEP, approaches for determining how students can be educated within the least restrictive environments, and strengthening the parent role on the CSE.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

The Department is currently reviewing or changing policies, procedures and programs that have a direct impact on the CSE process. Issues described elsewhere in this report that are being addressed by the Department include:

- least restrictive environment (recommendation #4);
- neutral funding (recommendation #3);
- curriculum development (recommendation #6);
- assistive technology (recommendation #11); and
- transition services (recommendation #12).

Although these separate discussions or activities have at times been linked (e.g., the reviews of LRE and State Aid for Special Education), they have not been incorporated into one comprehensive review.

The Commission specifically recommends that the Board of Regents develop and enforce procedures to ensure fairness in the education and vocational rehabilitation systems. The issue of fairness was recently considered in Department-sponsored legislation which will strengthen the impartiality of the special education impartial hearing system and the Special Education Mediation Program. Conforming regulatory changes were adopted as an interim emergency action by the Board of Regents. Changes were also recently adopted in the process for selecting fair hearing officers for the vocational rehabilitation system. These changes incorporate the participation of the Client Assistance Program and the approval of the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council in the selection process. Consumers will also be able to participate in the selection of the fair hearing officers who will hear their individual cases.

Implementation Directions:

The Department will conduct a comprehensive review of the CSE process, including the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) process. The CSE review will provide SED and the Board of Regents with specific recommendations to improve the CSE process, including ways to improve the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The review will also include: a reassessment of the role of parents, including foster parents, as both participants and advocates in the CSE process; a review of how the CSE process could more adequately include the participation of other State agency representatives, whenever appropriate; and a focus on outcomes that will lead to integrated employment and independence.

Such a review will be conducted as a separate study that will then be incorporated into the comprehensive planning process. Combining the CSE study with the public planning process would allow the greatest participation of parents, students and professionals in developing and commenting upon proposed changes. The study should include a review of the current training programs and mechanisms in place for CSE members. The study should also incorporate the recommendations of the Commission's Social Services Advocacy and Medical Issues Committee.

The Department must enforce the recent changes in its impartial hearing process. VESID and the Office of Elementary , Middle and Secondary Education (EMS) should then regularly assess the impact of these changes to determine whether they adequately address the Commission's concerns regarding the fairness and responsiveness of the impartial hearing process.

<u>Establish and enforce performance standards based on individual outcomes</u>

Discussion of Recommendation:

Three Commission recommendations aim at changing the way both individuals with disabilities and the programs that serve them are evaluated. They recognize that, while SED does have monitoring and technical assistance mechanisms that are focused on compliance issues, it does not have an overall methodology to assess the effectiveness of its many varied programs

in meeting the unique needs of persons with disabilities. These monitoring efforts can tell whether programs follow the correct processes for assessing and placing individuals with disabilities, but do not systematically provide information about whether such programs have resulted in positive outcomes for persons with disabilities.

In terms of program evaluation, the Commission strongly endorses a shift away from the focus on regulatory and procedural compliance. The Commission wants to change the basic focus from monitoring compliance to measuring achievement through student specific outcomes. The Commission supports the principle of A New Compact for Learning that students with disabilities in special education programs should strive to reach the same outcomes and goals as expected for students in general education.

The Commission recommends that comprehensive standards be established to measure the outcomes produced by all educational programs serving persons with disabilities. It would like to see the requirement for program standards extended by the Governor to all New York State programs that serve individuals with disabilities.

Once the standards are established, the Commission recommends that a reasonable timetable for evaluating all existing programs should be implemented. According to the Commission, all new and revised programs should be required to include an evaluation component that will collect information and measure the program's actual performance against the established standards.

The Commission also sets out specific enforcement recommendations so that programs will be subject to certain consequences for failing to meet the established standards. The Commission suggests that SED adopt a system of progressive sanctions that would condition awarding of State funds on program performance.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

The SED has already taken steps to establish program quality standards based on individual outcomes in some program areas. Most significantly, A New Compact for Learning supports the development of outcome-based educational standards that **all** students can achieve. The Part 100 regulations now require special education students to be instructed through the same curriculum as students without disabilities. Competency tests that measure outcomes must be offered with modifications that meet the needs of students with disabilities. These are the first steps toward including students with disabilities in a general performance-based system.

In addition, SED is moving in the direction of individualized performance standards in the School Quality Review Process, the implementation of the Systems Change Grant on Secondary and Transition Services, and work force preparation programs.

Admittedly, SED's efforts to monitor programs have focused on process compliance rather than outcomes in order to comply with Federal mandates. This is changing with the recent implementation of the:

- Case Service Review process that VESID uses to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive quality vocational rehabilitation services;

- Higher Education study of services for college students with disabilities;

- VESID-Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education (WPCE) initiative to develop a resource guide entitled "Adult Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities;"

- review protocol to identify persons who can move from sheltered workshops to more integrated employment; and

- outcome-based evaluation systems used to monitor Independent Living Centers and Early Childhood Direction Centers.

As an example of SED's efforts to enforce compliance with established standards, VESID's recently finalized Comprehensive Action Plan for Reform calls for performance-based contracts with providers that will tie the funding they receive to the outcomes they produce. The plan for implementing performance-based contracts will ensure that providers continue to serve persons with the most severe disabilities by developing performance standards that are adaptable to various types of programs.

Implementation directions:

While the Department endorses the establishment and enforcement of outcome- based standards for all its programs, the implementation of this recommendation must vary according to both the office of the Department and the activity involved. The following is a summary of how the Department will begin to implement the Commission's recommendations regarding outcome-based standards for individuals with disabilities:

o In developing outcome standards in education programs that are under the purview of EMS, the Department will incorporate long-term outcome goals relating to integrated employment and independence for persons with disabilities. SED will continue activities to ensure that the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Committees adequately addresses the needs of elementary and secondary students with disabilities. This will lead to appropriate outcome-based educational standards that can be achieved by students with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. The views and opinions of persons with disabilities who use the educational and rehabilitation services will be solicited and

considered when assessing outcomes. Such feedback could be obtained through the multiyear planning process described below.

- The Regents, as the New York State postsecondary education accrediting body, will continue to review all college programs according to Commissioner's regulations. These regulations already contain a standard requiring postsecondary institutions to provide the instructional and other support services students need to complete their academic program. During site reviews of postsecondary programs, the Office of Higher and Professional Education examines the services provided by the institution for students with disabilities.

  Compliance with Commissioner's regulations is assured by the Department's oversight process to which all postsecondary programs are subject. SED will continue to offer technical assistance necessary for programs that need improvement in order to ensure successful outcomes for college students with disabilities.

- For other programs, particularly those that are based upon grants or contracts that are administered by SED, each Department office will ensure compliance with the standards that are established by designing a system that ties funding to program effectiveness. A balance of sanctions and incentives should be considered. However, sanctions should be designed so that they do not jeopardize a program's opportunity to improve. SED will also offer the technical assistance necessary for programs that do not meet established standards to correct their deficiencies and produce successful outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Design a multiyear planning process supported by a database that will provide accurate, comprehensive information about persons with disabilities

Discussion of Recommendation:

The Commission recommendations regarding multiyear planning recognize the importance of planning the State's educational agenda based on factual, comprehensive information about persons with disabilities. They also recommend that SED be held accountable for the fulfillment of this plan through an annual report from the Commissioner to the Board of Regents, thus providing a comprehensive picture of how well SED is meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

Although many planning schemes are used throughout the SED and much information is already collected, there is no overall process for ensuring that services are coordinated for individuals across programs. There is no consolidated plan for assisting individuals in reaching their goals of being educated, employed and living independently in their community. The Commission recommends that priorities for the allocation of resources be determined on the

basis of factual research and analysis and by carefully listening to the testimony of consumers, families and advocates. The Commission anticipates that such a process will lead to more efficient, cost-effective services, which will lead to better outcomes for those SED serves. It believes that three-year plans would best coincide with Federal planning cycles.

The Commission recommends two specific ways to collect information to form the basis of the multiyear planning process:

1. meeting with individuals with disabilities, their families and advocates at annual statewide public forums to discuss their ability to access and succeed in services offered by SED; and

2. designing and maintaining an electronic database depository of data from educational and rehabilitation facilities and related agencies, to more intelligently project service need and set priorities for persons with disabilities.

Relying on persons with disabilities to describe their own needs through public forums seems elementary, but would ensure that multiyear plans address their actual needs, rather than those perceived by government agencies or service providers which may have a vested interest in establishing their own priorities. Establishing an extensive database of disability and service information would further ensure the reliability of information used to formulate plans and set priorities. With approval by EMS to pursue the data depository addressed in the Deputy Commissioner's policy directive of August 6, 1990, a base model for the statewide depository would be available and designed within national standards. The Commission further recognizes the need to adopt national standards for data transfer to encourage other agencies to participate so that planning can occur in a more coordinated fashion.

Combining first-hand information received directly from persons with disabilities and comprehensive data collected from all agencies which serve them would create a very powerful basis for planning services in New York State. As a result, the Commission envisions a much more convincing budget justification, more focused set of priorities, more responsive policy direction and a more innovative research agenda than are currently possible with a fragmented planning process.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

Multiyear plans are currently developed for individual programs administered by SED. A number of these plans focus exclusively on the needs of persons with disabilities: the VESID State Plans for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment and for Independent Living Services and the Elementary, Middle and Secondary State Plan for Special Education Services assure SED's compliance with Federal program requirements. Recent Federal legislation encourages closer coordination in the development of these plans.

Other offices prepare similar strategic plans which often address the needs of persons with disabilities among the other constituents they serve. For example, the SED Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education Teams I and II develop multiyear plans required under the Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (VATEA) and the Adult Education Act. These plans usually describe how the special needs of persons with disabilities will be addressed in the planned activities.

The SED Intra-Agency Council provides overall planning guidance and coordination for SED services for individuals with disabilities. The Council, which includes representatives of all the major offices of the SED, ensures that all relevant sections of the Department's plans reflect the commitment to quality services for persons with disabilities. The State Interagency Council for Vocational Rehabilitation and Related Services performs a similar function to coordinate services between SED and other agencies. The resulting memoranda of agreement set forth the plans and policies of SED and its partners for serving persons with disabilities.

Most SED plans include the direct involvement of their target audience obtained through focus groups, public forums, surveys or other means. Persons with disabilities are invited to and accommodated at these activities. In addition to seeking information directly from persons with disabilities, SED's recognition of the value of data and technology to support planning and policy making in a consistent fashion has resulted in the establishment of requirements for all Deputy Commissioner offices to present an annual Information Resource Management Plan and the organization of the Commissioner's Office of Telecommunications Policy Analysis and Development. The Department also has an active role on the Governor's Task Force on Telecommunication Networks.

SED has also begun to build a database similar to the one recommended by the Commission. A model data link in Rochester can now demonstrate the efficiency and usefulness of sharing school information about students via computers directly with VESID offices. In the not too distant future, this database, based on accepted national standards, will store information about all persons with disabilities involved in any educational program offered by SED. The information could then be used for analyzing trends, identifying services that lead to successful outcomes and planning services.

SED, through its support of such statewide database systems as Automate The Schools in New York City (ATS), the Student Information System (SIS), the Part 200 Management System for Special Education (PT200), the VESID Consumer Service Delivery System (CSDS), adult program databases and others, has taken the first step in standardizing the collection of disability and service related information. Of key importance to these systems and to the future data depository and necessary data transfer requirements is the establishment of unique identifiers for all students statewide. The New York State Legislature, in the Laws of 1988, Chapter 53, Section 15, directed the Commissioner of Education to "establish the procedures for a statewide system of assigning unique identification numbers for all students in public and private schools within the State for the purpose of student tracking and for State reporting purposes." This unique identification system and adoption of national standards that parallel the current database systems could provide the foundation for the broader database depository recommended.

Implementation directions:

Although a number of multiyear planning activities already occur within SED and with other agencies, closer coordination must occur. As a first step, this year SED will closely integrate the State Plans for Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living and Special Education, especially in the areas of transition services, and the long term goals of integrated employment and independence. In subsequent years, the cycles of public forums for all SED plans will coincide as much as possible so that all of the educational needs of persons with disabilities can be fully discussed at one meeting.

The Intra-Agency Council will review all existing SED plans for their appropriateness and adequacy in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. The Council will prepare an annual report to the Commissioner and Regents on SED's performance in serving persons with disabilities, including performance measured on the outcome standards developed under Commission recommendation #5. The Council will also continue to serve as SED's conscience in ensuring that all such plans fully accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.

SED will continue to build the comprehensive database that is being developed initially for electronically sharing information about school aged students with disabilities to ensure coordination with other programs. The potential of such a database to support individualized service planning, as well as statewide priority setting, is almost limitless. The database would also support program evaluation efforts as described elsewhere in this report. Extraordinary care must be taken to preserve the confidentiality and security of the information obtained.

At the same time, SED will pursue, through the State Interagency Council for Vocational Rehabilitation and Related Services and the New York State budget process, the design and installment of a statewide database of all New Yorkers with disabilities. The Department will begin discussions with the State agencies' representatives as soon as possible to discuss how the various databases could be connected and how they could best be used for public policy development. The database would not only collect information about those persons who are already being served by public programs, but also those who have not yet accessed government services. This information would allow for better estimates of the extent and types of services not yet being provided. To this end, information should be collected from medical sources, through the media, from employers, as well as from more traditional sources. In this way, New York State as a whole can determine the level of unmet need and prioritize services to meet that need.

Allow the appropriate access to and transfer of assistive technology among programs based on the needs of the individual

Discussion of Recommendation:

The Commission recognized the potential of technology to dramatically improve the independence and integration of persons with disabilities into their communities. As an educational tool, technology can bring lessons to an individual who cannot travel to a traditional learning site or can present the information in a manner that better matches the individual's learning capacity. As personal assistive devices, technology can overcome barriers to daily living activities such as mobility, communication, self-care, and learning.

The Commission also recognized that the high cost of technology affects its availability. The Commission recommends that a review be conducted of how technology is now allocated by government programs. It also recommends establishing a task force to study and eliminate impediments to transferring technology between agencies, so that if a piece of equipment or a modification is purchased for access to one program, the individual can take the needed technology when transitioning to the next needed service. If all agencies serving the individual are involved in planning and paying for the technology up front, the individual's needs will be better met and savings will result since the technology will not have to be replaced every time the individual moves to another program. The Commission recommends that SED's technology efforts continue to be coordinated with the Interagency Partnership on Technology and the Office of Advocate for the Disabled.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

The two SED offices most extensively involved in providing technology services to persons with disabilities, VESID and EMS, are working together to: coordinate policies, including the qualifications of providers; expand availability; explore possible strategies for transferring technology along with the student during transition from secondary school to adult programs; and develop information support systems for schools, vocational rehabilitation professionals and consumers. These support systems will include a network of vocational rehabilitation and special education professionals statewide who have been trained in the application of assistive technology and access to information databases. Common Federal directions on technology now found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 and the Technology Act contribute to these coordinated efforts. SED continues to coordinate technology efforts outside the Department as well, primarily with the Interagency Partnership on Technology, the Health Department, the Department of Social Services for Medicaid funded technology, and the Office of Advocate for the Disabled.

VESID and the higher and adult education communities are working together to delineate responsibility for all support services, including technology, for postsecondary and adult students with disabilities.

Implementation directions:

SED's current activities are moving the Department in a direction that is consistent with the Commission's recommendations. The Department must continue its efforts to make assistive technology more available, particularly through improvements in access and the transfer of technology. To this end, SED will review existing laws, regulations, and policies that may impose barriers to access and the smooth transfer of technology along with the individual as he or she moves through educational programs. The SED Intra-Agency Council can play an active role in this review and also for planning any resulting modifications to current requirements and/or practice. SED will also work with the Advocate's Office and the State Interagency Council for Vocational Rehabilitation and Related Services to review all New York State laws, regulations and policies for the similar purpose of eliminating barriers to technology access and transfer among different agencies serving persons with disabilities.

Training - Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

Discussion of recommendation:

The Commission recognizes that, in light of community-based programming and integrated philosophies for services, all educational professionals need skills to effectively deal with the supports and services needed by individuals with disabilities. It recommends that training occur to promote positive attitudes about persons with disabilities. According to the Commission, the awareness training should focus on:

- teachers, because of their influence on both students with and without disabilities;
- physicians, who often control access to services;
- program administrators and indirect service providers, such as budget and personnel officers;
- college admissions personnel and faculty;
- citizens; and
- opinion leaders, including the media, entertainment directors and producers and advertisers.

For educators, the Commission recommends an increase in preservice education which can introduce current directions, policy and philosophies in the disabilities field. This recommendation also includes in-service training for existing school staff and professionals. With changes continually taking place in philosophies and service delivery practices, on-going training is necessary. The special needs of persons with disabilities and their rights can also be built into the teaching curricula, such as in Grade 7 Social Studies and Grade 12 Participation in Government.

Another recommendation of the Commission is that the media should regularly be invited to workshops on issues that affect individuals with disabilities. Also, the Commission cites leadership through example as a very effective tool to broaden public awareness of the capabilities of persons with disabilities.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

Effective September 1, 1993, certification regulations for elementary teachers and teachers of secondary subjects require preparation for teaching students with disabilities; teacher education preservice programs have been modified to address this requirement.

SED has already taken steps to improve the preservice preparation of professional staff. Collaborative initiatives being undertaken by the Office of Higher and Professional Education, EMS, and VESID include:

- o cross-sharing of curriculum and course offerings between vocational rehabilitation and special education faculty members through University Leadership Institutes;
- o linkages between VESID and the graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling to develop instructional modules and design programs to meet staffing needs across the State (e.g., rehabilitation counseling in the schools);
- o expansion of the graduate rehabilitation internship experience within VESID District Offices; and
- o collaboration with the CUNY Consortium on Disability Studies to encourage the development of new course offerings in related service areas needed throughout the State.

In-service training initiatives have focused on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes among those who work with individuals with disabilities at local and State levels. Training on disability-related areas of programming has been initiated for EMS team leaders and staff. This is, however, only the first step to ensuring that field staff have the knowledge and expertise to lead school districts through changes in special education.

In-service training has included: (a) increasing supervisors' awareness about the abilities and needs of persons with disabilities; (b) training of school officials and non-special education related staff on adult outcomes for people with disabilities; (c) assisting colleges and adult/continuing education programs in implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act; and (d) increasing sensitivity for students, faculty and staff toward people with disabilities. These types of training programs are being used as models to further meet the intent of this recommendation. Networks such as the Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs), the New York State Regional Staff Development Consortia, the State Literacy Resource Center, Special Education Administrators Leadership Training Academy (SEALTA) and Special Education Parent Teachers Association (SEPTA) are working with VESID and EMS to provide additional technical assistance and training across the State.

Awareness and media programs have helped promote positive attitudes about individuals with disabilities. For instance, VESID sponsors annual events and awards ceremonies during October to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities. In addition, the Cross Systems Work Group on Training, of the State Interagency Council for Vocational Rehabilitation and Related Services, conducts activities to increase awareness of key issues. Initiatives have included the development of a directory of services, production of a work incentives videotape and accompanying handbook, and a public awareness campaign of entrepreneurial opportunities for people with disabilities.

Collaboration between VESID and EMS has just begun on the development of a Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD). This requirement from both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act provides an important opportunity to ensure an adequate supply of qualified professionals and para-professionals in rehabilitation, special education and related services. The CSPD will also develop and maintain an information system about training provided by institutions of higher education within the State that prepare education and rehabilitation professionals.

The Board of Regents has issued a policy statement on parent partnerships, linking families, communities and schools. The policy statement, which has particular significance for families with students who have disabilities, is the basis for extensive parent training through programs such as the Even Start Family Literacy Program, Early Childhood Direction Centers and Effective Parenting programs.

Implementation Directions:

The CSPD, jointly developed between VESID and EMS, will become the primary planning document to coordinate professional staff training directions. Collaboration among vocational rehabilitation and special education is necessary for the development and implementation of the CSPD. VESID, EMS and the Office of Higher and Professional Education, which has oversight over preservice teacher education in postsecondary institutions, will work cooperatively to provide technical assistance to faculty in these programs. The purposes are to enhance knowledge and skills and to improve attitudes of faculty and preservice teachers concerning students with disabilities.

The CSPD will also provide a single planning tool for in-service training across the State. The role of SETRC in providing training on State-driven priorities needs to be clearly defined. Coordination of training initiatives and networks will enhance training resources and impact across the State. Specific SETRCs will be identified to coordinate statewide training on critical disability issues, including transition and adult outcomes for individuals with disabilities, and disability awareness for professional and community staff. The training will also extend to parents, such as the efforts of EMS to develop a "best practices" videotape for parents within the community. Independent Living Centers will be invited to work with the SETRCs to ensure that this training accurately and appropriately portrays these issues.

The Department will work towards developing a greater awareness and understanding of the special needs and capabilities of people with disabilities in the communities across New York State. This effort will focus on ensuring that people in both public service and the private sector are more cognizant of what they can do to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream of society. The Department will develop a plan for collaborating with the media, particularly through its association with the public broadcasting stations, to better educate the general public concerning disability related issues. The coordinated plan would ensure coordination of resources, targeting of critical audiences and media types, and partnerships with the private sector.

The Office of Higher and Professional Education is reviewing all teacher education programs in relation to the recently adopted teacher certification requirements. These requirements specifically state that all teachers must be prepared to work effectively with students from minority cultures, students of both sexes, students from homes where English is not spoken, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students. As the regulations for teacher certification in other areas are modified, the Office of Higher and Professional Education will continue to assist preservice teacher education programs to ensure that teachers are prepared for working effectively with students with disabilities.

Training parents is essential to promoting positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The SED Office of Parent Partnerships, working with other offices, will continue to implement its policy goal of ensuring that existing preservice and in-service education programs for adult educators, teachers, administrators and support staff encompass practices and strategies for developing, in a multicultural context, partnerships with families, agencies and the community. These practices and strategies will include successful methods of working as partners with parents of students with disabilities and with parents who themselves have disabilities. The ECDCs will have an expanded role in training families with children with disabilities.

Prevention of Birth Defects and Accidents

Discussion of Recommendation:

The Commission recognizes that many disabilities are preventable through better prenatal and neonatal care, accident avoidance, and disease control. It cites the breakthroughs that have occurred in the prevention of disabilities, such as polio vaccine, that resulted from significant research supported through public and private institutions. Most of its recommendations are framed around the need for coordinated, intensive research to make disability prevention a reality.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Regents, working with the Governor, conduct a study of the effectiveness of existing prevention programs, comparing the cost of these programs with their outcomes. Based on the results of this study, the Regents should then develop a plan to coordinate research efforts on preventing birth defects and accidents. This plan should take into account the research under way sponsored by numerous state and Federal agencies, universities, not-for-profit organizations, proprietary firms and medical facilities.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

SED has been actively involved in a number of activities to reduce the incidence of preventable disabilities in New York State. Working with organizations such as the New York State Head Injury Association, the National Head Injury Association, and the Department of Health, VESID has contributed to training sessions that promote methods to avoid accidents that result in traumatic brain injuries. VESID also works with the Department of Health, which has the primary role for prevention, on preventing other disabilities. VESID, through its

Rehabilitation Management Services initiative, provides technical assistance to employers to prevent additional work site accidents that result in disabling injuries and increased workers' compensation costs. The Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education (WPCE) works collaboratively with the Department of Health and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council on parent education training for prevention, identification and advocacy for children with disabilities.

The SED provides information to teenage parents and parents-to-be about the importance of prenatal care, nutrition, accident prevention, drug and alcohol avoidance and other health issues that relate to disabilities. The SED also provides information and referrals to families of young children with disabilities through the Early Childhood Direction Centers across the State. These Centers also often advise families on how to alleviate the potential progression of limitations from the disability as the child grows up. Similarly, these Centers can help families avoid secondary disabilities which may stem from the primary condition of their child. In addition, the Even Start Family Literacy Program, Early Intervention Program, and Prekindergarten Programs convey similar information to other parents.

Implementation Directions:

The Regents will develop a position that promotes a comprehensive research and dissemination agenda for preventing disabling birth defects, diseases and accidents in higher education institutions and other research organizations.

The dissemination will target the general public, parents, employers, and educators who can spread prevention methods through teaching and example. SED will expand the role of Early Childhood Direction Centers, in concert with Independent Living Centers, to more visibly promote disability prevention in the local communities. Statewide training networks, such as the SETRCs and SEALTAs will incorporate disability prevention into their in-service training programs for teachers and other educators where appropriate.

The schools are a natural place to teach young people how to prevent accidents and disabilities resulting from birth defects and diseases. The health and safety curriculum taught in schools should examine these issues and the consequences of having a disability for life. Schools are also a good place to teach by example, and SED reviews of schools should ensure that they are accident-free environments as much as possible.

Smooth, Effective Transition through the Life Course

Discussion of recommendation:

The Commission recognizes that individuals with disabilities and their families may need special supports as they move through the critical points along the continuum of educational programs that meet their needs. The Commission also believes that it is essential for students

with disabilities to develop independent living skills to assist themselves through these transitions. The critical transition points include the steps from:

- o early identification of the person's disability and first intervention (birth to two) to early childhood education (ages three to five);
- o a variety of preschool settings (preschool, Head Start, day care) to elementary school;
- o elementary to middle school programming;
- o secondary school to college, business or trade training, other adult education, community living, or employment; and
- o postsecondary education to community-based employment.

The Commission recommends that for a seamless transition system to exist, coordination of resources, collaboration of expertise, and streamlining of existing systems need to take place. The Commission recommends that assessments for high school students focus on transition skills, including familiarity with assistive technology, needed to prepare for educational, vocational, or postsecondary outcomes. The assessment should begin earlier than required by law, as early as the seventh grade, in order to plan for transition. The Commission stresses that coordination among systems and resources, including the private sector, is necessary to ensure that assessments and services are not unnecessarily duplicated as the individual moves through the system.

The Commission believes that, to fully participate in their communities and the work force, more students with disabilities should pursue further education after high school. The Commission proposes that to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in postsecondary education, formal links must be established with VESID staff, guidance counselors, college advisors and recruiters, high school teachers and Independent Living Centers. As a result, students and their families would have better access to information about support services, financial aid and special programs.

The Commission recommends that mentor programs be developed in schools and universities. Youth with disabilities now have very few role models of successful professionals with disabilities, either in high schools or on college campuses. From mentors, youth with disabilities would learn how to pursue careers and gain experience in their chosen fields, as well as the skills necessary for their own self-determination and goal-setting.

In order to promote the transition into employment, the Commission also recommends that the Governor and Legislature enact stronger incentives and eliminate existing disincentives, thus encouraging individuals with disabilities to enter the labor market.

Current or Past Activities that Address the Recommendation:

The Board of Regents, through the SED, has developed policies and implementation strategies for lifelong learning for people with disabilities in New York State. Lifelong learning hinges on effective transitions through the life course of persons with disabilities.

While the main focus of transition planning has been on the step between school and adult life, the transition from the early intervention (birth to two) system to the early childhood education system (ages three to five) is also receiving attention. Negotiations are taking place between the Department of Health and the SED to ensure a seamless array of services at this early transition point. The Early Childhood Direction Centers can assist families during this transition and are currently extending their role within their communities to assist families with the transition between early intervention and preschool special education.

VESID, in collaboration with EMS, continues to implement the 1990 Regents Policies on Linking Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Through the directions set by these policies, and with the support of a Federal systems change grant, SED has begun a five- phase process to develop New York State's transition approach. The development phases are: understanding and assessing, organizing and planning, implementing capacity building initiatives, formalizing the system, and evaluating and modifying.

The components of the transition approach address: (a) the development of a single system for transition to be used across the State, (b) provision of transition services at age 15 (earlier than required by Federal law), (c) coordination of resources and expertise in the planning and delivery of services, and (d) enhancement of knowledge regarding incentives to employment for people with disabilities. Specifically, focus has been given to the following critical areas:

- o develop skills necessary for students with disabilities to participate in planning their individualized educational program (IEP) and determining their own goals;
- o involve families in the transition planning process;
- o incorporate transition planning and delivery of services within the secondary education program;
- o involve rehabilitation in transition planning and the development of effective systems for referral and transition;
- o transition students with disabilities from secondary school to postsecondary settings and from college to employment;
- o transition students with disabilities from secondary school to adult and continuing education and the respective transition from adult and continuing education to employment;

- o expand opportunities for youth and adults to participate in work force preparation programs;

- o develop skills needed for independence and establish the role of Independent Living Centers in working with youth with disabilities;

- o develop materials and training for college career development and placement offices through a joint project between VESID and the Office of Higher and Professional Education; and

- o develop pilot programs for school-to-work transition for students with disabilities.

In addition, VESID is working with both the Office of Higher and Professional Education and EMS to develop joint agreements to enhance services for people with disabilities in colleges, universities and adult and continuing education programs.

Implementation Direction:

SED will continue to promote lifelong learning with smooth transitions between programs, beginning at the early intervention stage and continuing through adulthood.

Particular attention will be given to the transition from the early intervention system (birth to two) to the preschool special education system (ages three to five). Improving the dialogue and clarifying the roles of the Department of Health, local health providers, and preschool programs will result in more effective progress from one system to the next.

SED will continue its plans for developing a statewide transition approach. This effort will continue to focus on postsecondary education, adult and continuing education, community living and employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities. Training will be provided to Committees on Special Education to ensure that they are aware of available service options to be considered during transition planning for individual students. Close coordination among EMS, the Office of Higher and Professional Education and VESID will ensure change occurs at both the State and local levels. SED will also work cooperatively with other agencies that provide adult services to ensure that they fulfill their obligations under the transition component of the IEPs. VESID will continue to seek input from local constituent work groups to ensure quality during the discussion and action phases of the **Blueprint**. Of particular importance is the involvement of ethnically diverse communities to ensure that students from different ethnic and language backgrounds are prepared for and have access to adult opportunities.

Cooperation among VESID and the Offices of Higher and Professional Education and Workforce Preparation, soon to be formalized, will continue to provide support for successfully educating students with disabilities in the work place. The implementation will require ongoing coordination among the respective offices and State and local organizations and institutions.

The development of independence among individuals with disabilities remains critical. Staff of Independent Living Centers can play a key role in developing the skills of and serving as models of independence for young persons with disabilities. Enhanced training, development of mentor programs, and establishment of formal volunteer programs (with credit experiences) for people with disabilities will be developed.

Further dissemination of the work incentives videotape and accompanying handbook, "Going to Work? Work Incentives You Should Know About" and subsequent regional training are planned. Additional information and training should be provided on benefits for youth with disabilities, their families, and school officials. The work incentives video and handbook can provide a framework for increased training and technical assistance to schools. The Department will also explore with other State agencies whether changes should be made to Federal mandates and policies to improve work incentive programs.

Increase the placement of students in the least restrictive environments.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

3: Services Based on the Specific Needs of Students with Disabilities
4: Increased Placements in the Least Restrictive Environments

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Study how and why students are referred to the local Committees on Special Education (CSEs).	The Department is currently reviewing its policies regarding the placement of students in the least restrictive environment (LRE).	The Department will continue to develop its position on LRE, incorporating the Commission's goal to increase the placement of students with disabilities to the level of the national average. (April 1994)	A larger percentage of students with disabilities will be educated within community-based regular classrooms and integrated settings.
Encourage alternative models of special education.	SED is identifying model schools that are particularly effective in serving students in district-based programs.	The Department will continue to promote the development of alternative models of special education programs and services. (Ongoing)	A full range of special education options will be available for students with disabilities, including at the preschool level.
Change the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to explain how the proposed educational program will lead to a less restrictive life for the child.	CSEs are currently required to consider and describe how the proposed placement reflects the least restrictive educational environment for the child.	In developing its position on LRE, the Department will consider methods to relate the contents of the IEP to the lifelong goals of integration into society. (September 1995)	IEPs will better reflect the lifelong goal of integration into the mainstream of society for the student with a disability.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Make funding of special education services neutral, meaning that there should be no incentive to maintain a system of segregated education.	The Department is considering alternative funding options for special education services.	The Department will propose revisions to its funding formula for special education to be fiscally neutral. (April 1994)	The placement of students with disabilities will be based on the specific needs of the student.

Critically Review the Committee on Special Education Process through which students access the educational services they need.

Addresses Commission recommendation

#13: Make the Service Delivery System More Fair and More Responsive

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Conduct a comprehensive review of the Committee on Special Education Process.	The Department is reviewing and changing a number of policies and procedures related to the CSE process, including: least restrictive environment policies; State aid funding for special education; the availability of assistive technology; and transition services.	The Department will conduct a comprehensive review of the CSE process that will incorporate all policies, procedures and outcomes of the CSE process. The review will lead to a comprehensive plan for revising the CSE process. (Study: April 1994 - December 1994 Implementation: September 1995)	The CSE process will be significantly modified to be more accessible to consumers, strengthen the role of parents, result in the delivery of more appropriate services based upon student needs and lead to more integrated placements for students with disabilities.
Develop and enforce procedures to ensure fairness in the education and vocational rehabilitation systems.	The Department has recently adopted regulations to conform to legislation that strengthens the impartiality of the special education impartial hearing process. VESID has recently adopted new procedures for the selection of impartial hearing officers in the vocational rehabilitation process.	The Department must enforce the recent changes in its due process procedures and assess the impact of the changes. (Immediately)	The due process procedures in special education and vocational rehabilitation will be more fair and more responsive to individuals with disabilities.

Establish and enforce performance standards based on individual outcomes.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

5: Compliance with Outcome-Based Standards
6: Specific Goals and Outcomes for Special Education Curricula
7: Evaluation of All Existing and New Programs

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Establish performance standards based on student outcomes for all educational programs serving persons with disabilities.	A New Compact for Learning sets standards that all students can meet. Performance standards are being developed through the Curriculum and Assessment Teams, the School Quality Review Process, work force preparation programs and the Transition Systems Change Grant.	The Department will ensure that Curriculum and Assessment Teams are adequately addressing the needs of elementary and secondary students with disabilities through collaborative efforts with VESID and the Interagency Council. (Ongoing)	Students with disabilities will be measured by the same standards as all students.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Evaluate educational program performance against the established standards. Include an evaluation component in all new and revised programs.	The focus of SED monitoring is changing from compliance issues to outcomes. The focus on outcomes is reflected in the VESID Case Service Review system, the Higher Education study on students with disabilities, annual reviews of extended employment, and evaluations of independent living centers and early childhood direction centers. Part 100 regulations now require students in special education be instructed through the same curriculum as all students, thus establishing a consistent standard for all students. Databases for EMS and VESID are being revised and coordinated so that information regarding the outcomes of special education will become more readily available.	All offices of the Department will evaluate existing educational programs against performance standards. (July 1995) The related Offices of SED will work together to insure that technical assistance is offered for programs that need improvement in order to ensure successful outcomes for college students with disabilities. (Ongoing)	Students with disabilities will develop competencies that meet recognized standards and therefore will achieve greater success in the community and the work place.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Develop enforcement systems to tie funding to program performance.	Under VESID Reform efforts, performance based contracts will be developed with service providers.	After thorough review, the Department should design a system that enforces compliance with standards, such as tying levels of funding with levels of performance. (September 1995) All offices of the Department will continue to provide technical assistance and training to programs as needed to improve outcomes for persons with disabilities. (Ongoing)	Programs that produce quality outcomes will be rewarded; those which do not meet standards will receive technical assistance and training to improve their performance.

Design a multiyear planning process supported by a database that will provide accurate, comprehensive information about persons with disabilities.

Addresses Commission recommendations:

1: Multiyear planning
2: Priorities for the Allocation of Resources
#10: Statewide Database, Research, and Information Program

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Develop a comprehensive multiyear SED planning process for serving persons with disabilities throughout the educational system.	SED prepares multiyear State Plans for vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, independent living and special education. Intra-Agency Council coordinates plans for serving persons with disabilities by all programs administered by SED. Interagency Council coordinates plans related to vocational rehabilitation and related services across NYS agencies.	The Intra-Agency Council will review all existing plans for adequacy of serving persons with disabilities. Individual office plans will be based on advice from public forums conducted in compliance with respective State Plan requirements. (March 1994) The Intra-Agency Council will coordinate the development of a multiyear comprehensive plan and an annual report to the Regents on educational services to persons with disabilities. (July 1994)	Better coordination of plans will reduce duplication, improve cost-effectiveness of services and result in a more systemic approach to achieving desired outcomes.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Allocate resources based on priorities set through the planning process.	SED program offices now justify budgets and allocate resources based on directions of A New Compact for Learning and information collected through public forums.	Priorities and resource allocation will be based on information from public forums and analysis of each respective office's database. (July 1995)	SED's budget justification, priority setting, research agenda, and resource allocation would be based on accurate, reliable information documented through the forums and database.
Conduct annual forums to collect input directly from persons with disabilities.	SED program offices hold public forums to solicit the advice of consumers on the State Plans.	SED will coordinate public forums that focus on educational issues related to persons with disabilities, combining separate public hearings wherever possible. (September 1994)	Persons with disabilities would have coordinated opportunities to contribute to the overall direction of educational services they need.
Design a database, first within SED, then across other agencies to project service needs and set priorities.	SED has begun to develop the database recommended by the Commission.	EMS will take the lead in building the comprehensive database with SED. (Ongoing) The Interagency Council should consider building a statewide database of all New Yorkers with disabilities.	The availability of such a database would substantially improve the process of public policy development and resource development. Plans and services would be better coordinated across SED offices and across other NYS agencies.

Allow the appropriate access to and transfer of assistive technology among programs based on the needs of the individual.

Addresses Commission recommendation:

11: Appropriate Use and Transfer of Assistive Technologies

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Review how technology is provided by State agencies.	SED is working with the Interagency Partnership on Technology for Persons with Disabilities to develop statewide principles for providing assistive technology.	SED will continue to take an active role and work with the Interagency Partnership. (Ongoing)	Costs will be reduced because unnecessary duplication will be eliminated.
Establish a task force to study and eliminate impediments to transferring technology between programs.	VESID and EMS are working together to develop a common policy on providing technology, including standards for providers and transfer of technology during transition. VESID and Higher and Professional Education continue to discuss responsibility for support services, including providing technology to postsecondary students with disabilities.	In cooperation with the Office of Advocate for the Disabled, which has lead responsibility for statewide directions on technology for people with disabilities, SED will review and eliminate existing SED laws, regulations, and policies that impose unnecessary barriers to access to and transfer of technology as an individual moves through the educational system. The Intra-Agency Council would coordinate this effort for the Department. (April 1994)	Individuals with disabilities will have appropriate technology available regardless of the program serving them.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Continue to coordinate technology efforts with Advocate's Office and Interagency Partnership on Technology.	SED currently coordinates provision of technology with DSS (Medicaid) and DOH.	SED will continue to take an active role in coordinating technology efforts with all appropriate State agencies. (Ongoing)	People with disabilities will receive the technology supports they require throughout the life course.

Improved and More Sensitive Preservice, In-service, and Community Training

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Develop skills among all educational professionals to effectively deal with the supports and services needed by individuals with disabilities.	Based upon changes in federal legislation, VESID and EMS are working together on a coordinated Comprehensive System for Personnel Development.	The Comprehensive System for Personnel Development will become the primary planning document to coordinate professional staff training directions. (July 1994)	The preservice and in-service development of all educational professionals will be modified to appropriately reflect the skills necessary to work with students with disabilities.
	Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs), the Special Education Administrators Leadership Training Association (SEALTA) and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) have been working with EMS and VESID to provide in-service training to special and non-special education administrators and staff regarding the needs of students with disabilities.	The Department will review how it provides training on disability issues to Department staff, professionals, and families. Internal and external training resources will be identified and directed toward this effort. (July 1994) The role of SETRC in providing training on State-driven priorities for students with disabilities will continue to include statewide training in critical disability issues. ECDCs should have expanded capacity for parent training. (July 1994)	Practicing education professionals will develop skills for working with students with disabilities based upon State driven priorities.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
	VESID, EMS and the Office of Higher and Professional Education (OHPE) have collaborated to expand and improve preservice programs for education professionals. Effective September 1, 1993, certification regulations for elementary teachers and teachers of secondary subjects require preparation for teaching students with disabilities.	VESID, EMS and OHPE will continue to work together to improve and to provide technical assistance to preservice education programs in postsecondary institutions. (Ongoing)	Professionals graduating from preservice education programs will have training in the attitudes and skills necessary to work with students with disabilities.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
The Department should work with leaders in the media field to broaden public awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities. The Department should provide leadership through example as a tool to broaden public awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities.	The Department has had several initiatives (e.g. public service announcements, publications, award presentations, etc.) to promote awareness regarding the education and employment of people with disabilities.	The Department will develop a plan for collaborating with the media on disability related issues, particularly through its association with public broadcasting stations, to better educate the general public. (July 1994) The Department will provide information and technical assistance, directed at people in the public and private sectors, to increase awareness of the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities. (Ongoing)	People in the public and private sectors will have a better awareness and understanding of how to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream of society.

Prevention of Birth Defects and Accidents

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
The Regents should develop a plan to coordinate research and other efforts in preventing birth defects and accidents.	The Department has several separate initiatives to reduce the incidence of preventable disabilities in New York State. These include: • providing training that is coordinated with other state agencies and organizations (e.g., the Department of Health and the National Head Injury Association). • working with the Department of Health in its disability prevention efforts. • providing information and referrals through the efforts of the Early Childhood Direction Centers.	SED will expand the role of Early Childhood Direction Centers to more visibly promote disability prevention activities in local communities. (July 1994) SETRCs and SEALTAs will incorporate disability prevention into their in-service training programs. (July 1994) The Regents will develop a position that promotes comprehensive research and dissemination agenda for preventing disabling birth defects, diseases and accidents in higher education institutions and other research organizations. (December 1994)	A comprehensive body of research regarding the prevention of disabling birth defects, diseases and accidents will become available. Information regarding disability prevention will be disseminated at the local level to parents and professionals working with young children. Information regarding disability prevention will be disseminated to education professionals.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
		The health and safety curriculum taught in schools should examine the issues of disability prevention. (September 1995)	Disability prevention will be adequately addressed in the health and safety curriculum.
		SED reviews of schools will promote establishing that they are functioning in the most accident-free environments as possible. (September 1994)	Schools will become models for accident prevention.

Smooth, Effective Transitions Through the Life Course

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Provide a seamless transition system to coordinate resources, collaborate in expertise and streamline existing systems.	SED is currently implementing existing Regents policies regarding lifelong learning and transitions.	SED will continue to promote lifelong learning with smooth transitions between programs. (Ongoing)	Persons with disabilities will more easily access the full range of services that are under the purview of the State Education Department.
Improve the transition from early interventions to early childhood and preschool programs.	SED is working with the Department of Health in developing a seamless transition from first intervention to early childhood to preschool programs and services.	SED will place a greater focus on the transition from the early intervention system to the preschool system. (Ongoing)	The services of SED, the Department of Health, and local health providers will better support the transition of students from early childhood to preschool programs.
Improve the transition from school to work and from school to higher and continuing education programs.	The Department is in its third year of a five year systems change effort to improve the transition of students from school to work and higher education programs.	SED will continue to develop its statewide transition approach through collaborative efforts between its respective Offices. (Ongoing)	Students with disabilities will leave school ready to work or enter employment. In those instances in which students may require additional services from VESID, the services will be provided quickly and without interruption of existing supports.

Actions recommended by Commission	Current or Past SED Activities	Implementation Directions	Expected Outcome
Promote mentoring and volunteer programs.	The Department does not have a distinct statewide initiative to develop mentoring or volunteer programs for high school students with disabilities.	SED will promote secondary-level employment-related programs for people with disabilities (e.g., mentoring programs, volunteer programs). (September 1994 - ongoing)	Students with disabilities will gain experience that will enhance their ability to enter integrated employment programs when they leave school.
Enact stronger incentives and fewer disincentives to encourage individuals with disabilities to enter the labor market.	VESID has developed and provided training programs for its staff and independent living service professionals regarding work incentive programs for people with disabilities.	The Department will expand its focus on work incentive issues to provide additional information and training and to work with other agencies in promoting change in relevant federal mandates, policies and procedures. (Ongoing)	Disincentives to employment, both actual and perceived, will be reduced. More people with disabilities will take advantage of work incentives as they consider their employment options.
Establish formal links with high school and college campuses to ensure a smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary education programs.	VESID, EMS and OHPE are developing joint agreements to enhance services for people with disabilities in colleges, universities and adult and continuing education programs.	VESID, EMS and OHPE will implement agreements to provide supports for students as they transition into higher and continuing education programs, and to expand supports for students with disabilities in such programs. These efforts will be done in collaboration with public and private schools and appropriate organizations. (Ongoing)	Students and their families will have better access to information about support services, financial assistance, and special programs in higher and continuing education institutions.

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